

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5798

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USUN 0516

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UN, RQ

SUBJ: PUERTO RICO AND THE COMMITTEE OF 24

REF: (A) STATE 002729; (B) USUN 6086

1. BACKGROUND. DURING THE CLOSING DAYS OF ITS 1975 SESSION, THE COMMITTEE OF 24 (C-24) WITNESSED THE INTRODUCTION OF A CUBAN INITIATED RESOLUTION CO-SPONSORED BY THE CONGO, IRAQ, MALI AND SYRIA, WHICH INTER-ALIA CALLED FOR UN RECOGNITION OF A PUERTO RICAN "NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT." ON AUGUST 20, AUSTRALIA INTRODUCED A PROCEDURAL MOTION TO POSTPONE CONSIDERATION OF PUERTO RICO UNTIL THE 1976 SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE. THAT MOTION PASSED ELEVEN TO NINE WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS, ONE ABSENCE AND ONE NOT PARTICIPATING.

2. DURING THE 30TH UNGA AUSTRALIAN DEPUTY PERMREP CAMPBELL SUGGESTED A STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH PUERTO RICO IN THE C-24 WHICH THE US AGREED TO. CAMPBELL'S STRATEGY CALLS FOR INTRODUCING A PROCEDURAL RESOLUTION IN THE COMMITTEE WHICH "DECIDES TO CONCLUDE ITS COMMITTEE OF 24 EXAMINATION OF THIS QUESTION (PUERTO RICO) SUBJECT TO ANY DIRECTIVES WHICH THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MIGHT GIVE IN THAT CONNECTION." IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH CAMPBELL, HE EMPHASIZED THAT IF THE STRATEGY WERE TO SUCCEED, THERE MUST BE NO APPARENT CONNECTION TO THE US. HE ASKED THAT WE NEITHER LOBBY ON PUERTO RICO IN THE COMMITTEE OF 24 (C-24), EXCEPT FOR A LAST MINUTE EFFORT WITH A FEW SELECTED COUNTRIES (TUNISIA, AFGHANISTAN, CHINA, CONFIDENTIAL

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YUGOSLAVIA) NOR MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH MIGHT APPEAR

TO LEND CREDENCE TO THE CUBAN LINE THAT MEMBERS OF C-24 ARE SUBSERVIENT TO THE US. FOLLOWING CAMPBELL'S REASSIGNMENT TO THE MFA IN CANBERRA, NORWEGIAN DEPUTY PERMREP VRAALSEN (COMMITTEE VICE CHAIRMAN) INDICATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO PURSUE CAMPBELL'S STRATEGY. NORWAY REPLACED DENMARK IN 1976 AS THE NORDIC MEMBER OF C-24, AND AUSTRALIA NO LONGER HAS A VICE CHAIRMANSHIP. END BACKGROUND.

3. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REF A, AMB WHITE AND MISOFF DISCUSSED PUERTO RICO IN COMMITTEE OF 24 WITH VRAALSEN (NORWAY) AND REID (AUSTRALIA) ON JANUARY 20. BOTH VRAALSEN AND REID SAID THAT HEIGHTENED TENSION RELATED TO THE C-24 IN THE CLOSING DAYS OF 30TH UNGA MILITATED AGAINST EARLY INTRODUCTION OF CAMPBELL'S RESOLUTION ON PUERTO RICO, AS CAMPBELL HAD ORIGINALLY SUGGESTED (REF B). VRAALSEN WHO IS JOINING THE COMMITTEE THIS YEAR WANTS TIME TO GAUGE THE MOOD OF THE COMMITTEE BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER TO PROCEED. HE STRESSED THAT SITUATION IN C-24 WILL BE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT THIS SESSION. REID AGREED.

4. VRAALSEN EMPHASIZED THAT FOR CAMPBELL'S RESOLUTION TO BE ADOPTED, US MUST NOT ENGAGE IN LOBBYING OR COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH WOULD LEND CREDENCE TO CUBAN CHARGES THAT COMMITTEE MEMBERS ARE SUBSERVIENT TO THE US. VRAALSEN ASKED THAT NO ACTION BE TAKEN BY US RELATED TO THE CAMPBELL RESOLUTION WITHOUT CONSULTATIONS WITH VRAALSEN. WE SAID WE UNDERSTOOD BUT WARNED HIM THAT CUBAN CHARGES MIGHT DEMAND A US RESPONSE.

5. VRAALSEN AND REID BOTH GUESSED THAT CUBA WOULD NOT PRESS FOR EARLY CONSIDERATION OF THE PUERTO RICO ITEM DUE TO CUBAN SENSITIVITY TO NON-ALIGNED SPLIT ON ANGOLA. THEY AGREED IT IS THE NORMAL PREDILECTION OF COMMITTEE TO PUT OFF CONSIDERATION OF PUERTO RICO UNTIL LATE IN COMMITTEE OF 24'S SESSION, BECAUSE IT IS SUCH A SENSITIVE AND DIFFICULT SUBJECT. AMB WHITE UNDERLINED THAT WE VERY MUCH HOPED THEY WOULD GO AHEAD WITH THE STRATEGY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE TO THE US.

6. ON FEBRUARY 6 VRAALSEN AND JOHANSEN OF THE NORWEGIAN MISSION AND REID AND FORRESTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN MISSION MET WITH AMB WHITE AND MISOFF TO ASSESS THE STATE OF PLAY IN PUERTO RICO IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE C-24. REID INFORMED US THAT THE COMMITTEE WOULD HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10. IN VRAALSEN'S AND REID'S VIEW IT IS TOO EARLY YET TO MAKE A DEFINITIVE COMMITMENT TO THE CAMPBELL STRATEGY. THEY AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE THE WORKING GROUP HAS BEEN CONVENED (WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS) AND BEGINS ITS ALLOCATION OF PRIORITIES, IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO COME TO A DECISION. VRAALSEN CONFIRMED REPORTS OF PROPOSED REORGANIZATION OF THE COMMITTEE BUT SAID THE COMMITTEE WOULD

MEET DURING THE LOS CONFERENCE, IN CONTRAST TO INFORMATION PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED. VRAALSEN SAID THE COMMITTEE HOPES TO COMPLETE ITS WORK BY AUGUST.

7. VRAALSEN EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT NEITHER NORWAY NOR AUSTRALIA SHOULD TAKE ANY ACTION ON PUERTO RICO IN THE COMMITTEE UNTIL PUERTO RICO IS MENTIONED. VRAALSEN SPECULATED THAT CUBA MIGHT BE MORE RETICENT TO BEAT THE PUERTO RICAN DRUM IN LIGHT OF THE HEIGHTENED TENSIONS BETWEEN CUBA AND THE UNITED STATES OVER ANGOLA. AMB WHITE EXPRESSED OUR INTEREST IN HAVING NEWS OF THEIR ASSESSMENT AT AS EARLY A DATE AS POSSIBLE.

8. AMB WHITE DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY THAT PUERTO RICO MIGHT BE RAISED AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION IN GENEVA, THE NON-ALIGNED GROUP COORDINATING GROUP AT THE UN, THE APRIL NAG FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING AND THE NAG SUMMIT IN COLOMBO. SHE SAID THAT POSTS WOULD BE DISCUSSING PUERTO RICO WITH HOST GOVERNMENTS IN RELATION TO THESE MEETINGS BUT THAT WE ARE ASKING THAT NO ACTION RELATED TO THE COMMITTEE OF 24 BE TAKEN AT THIS TIME.

9. AT THE DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST WE LATER QUERIED JOHANSEN ABOUT THE NORWEGIAN VIEW ON DISCUSSING PUERTO RICO IN GENERAL TERMS (NOT RELATED TO THE C-24) WITH COUNTRIES WHICH ARE MEMBERS OF THE C-24. HE SAID THAT WHILE ANY SUCH DECISION IS FOR US TO MAKE, HE THOUGHT SUCH ACTION WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. FORRESTER (AUSTRALIA) EXPRESSED SIMILAR RESERVATIONS ABOUT OUR DISCUSSING PUERTO RICO WITH MEMBERS AT THIS TIME.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USUN 0516

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10. REID AGAIN SUGGESTED THAT WE CONSIDER ACCEPTING A COMMITTEE OF 24 VISITING MISSION TO US NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES. WE POINTED OUT THAT WHILE THE ISSUE IS UNDER CONSIDERATION, THE COMMITTEE'S REPORT AT THE 30TH UNGA MADE IT VERY UNLIKELY THAT WE COULD GO ALONG WITH THE SUGGESTION. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEE OF 24 MEMBERS COULD BE INVITED TO PUERTO RICO DURING THIS ELECTION YEAR. WE PROMISED TO PASS HIS SUGGESTION TO THE PUERTO RICAN GOVERNMENT.

11. COMMENT. USUN BELIEVES WE SHOULD GIVE VRAALSEN AND REID TIME TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH THE CAMPBELL RESOLUTION ON PUERTO RICO OR NOTE BEFORE TAKING ALTERNATIVE ACTION. WE AGREE WITH THEIR ASSESSMENT THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER NOT TO LAUNCH THE RESOLUTION AT ALL THAN TO TABLE IT AND HAVE IT DEFEATED. CAMPBELL'S PREDICTION OF MID-FEBRUARY ACTION ON PUERTO RICO ABOVE AND BEYOND THE ALLOCATION OF THE AGENDA ITEM WAS BASED ON HIS TAKING THE INITIATIVE AT THE TIME OF AGENDA ALLOCATION. IT IS USUN'S STRONG VIEW THAT NEITHER DEPARTMENT NOR POSTS SHOULD RAISE THE ISSUE OF PUERTO RICO IN THE COMMITTEE OF 24 AT A TIME WHEN VRAALSEN AND REID ARE DECIDING WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH THE STRATEGY ON OUR BEHALF WHICH WE HAVE ENDORSED. WE AGREE WITH THEIR ASSESSMENT THAT ANY VISIBLE US INVOLVEMENT WOULD MAKE THE STRATEGY UNFEASIBLE. WE ALSO AGREE WITH THEIR VIEW THAT ANY OVERT US PRESSURE WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AS IT WOULD APPEAR TO SUBSTANTIATE THE CUBAN LINE THAT COMMITTEE OF 24 MEMBERS ARE SUBSERVIENT TO THE UNITED STATES AND WOULD MAKE CONFIDENTIAL

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IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR SOME COMMITTEE OF 24 MEMBERS TO SUPPORT THE AUSTRALIAN-NORWEGIAN RESOLUTION. FOR THAT REASON THE US SHOULD AVOID RAISING THE QUESTION OF PUERTO RICO WITH COUNTRIES WHICH ARE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE ISSUE OF PUERTO RICO AND THE COMMITTEE OF 24 WITH ANY COUNTRIES AT THIS TIME. IN THE EVENT THAT VRAALSEN AND REID DECIDE THEY DON'T HAVE THE VOTES TO WIN ON THEIR RESOLUTION AND DO NOT PROCEED WITH THEIR STRATEGY, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO RESPOND ON SHORT NOTICE TO CUBAN ACTION IN THE COMMITTEE. WE ENDORSE REID'S SUGGESTION THAT INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS BE INVITED TO PUERTO RICO DURING THE YEAR. WASHINGTON AMBS SHOULD ALSO BE INVITED IN OUR VIEW SO AS NOT TO FOCUS TOO NARROWLY ON NEW YORK.
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